

BEING A LEADER

LESSON 1: LEADERSHIP DEFINED



*leadership
behavior
purpose
direction
motivation*

PURPOSE

This chapter defines leadership. Learning good leadership skills and becoming a successful leader are not easy tasks. With this basic introduction of leadership, you can begin to appreciate the responsibilities that successful leaders have to themselves, their subordinates, their supervisors, and their organization.

INTRODUCTION

Let's take a look at one definition of leadership.

Leadership is the ability (or process) to influence, lead, or guide others so as to accomplish a mission in the manner desired by providing purpose, direction and motivation.

Purpose gives others a reason for why they should do something.

Direction gives others the “knowledge” to complete the task.

Motivation gives others the will to do what they are capable of doing.

Organizationally speaking, there are positions to which leaders are assigned. They usually have others reporting to them. This structure is similar in team sports, scouts, church, schools, and government. It is a “chain of command” that is respected and followed. We will be discussing the growth of leadership and management in Lesson 2.

However, for now, let's look at “leadership” **behaviors** and **you** — a high school student. Do you think of yourself as a leader?

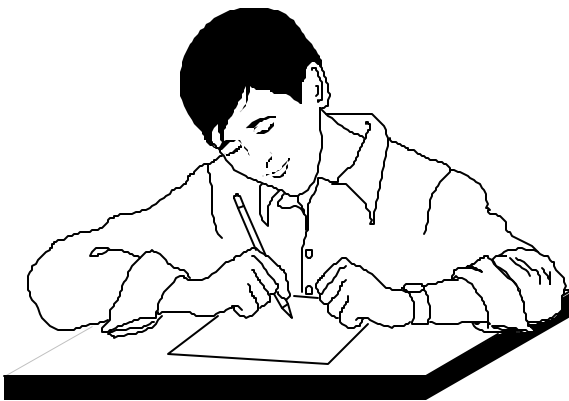
Let's return to the definition. *The ability to influence others.* Influence is defined as the power to control or affect others by authority, persuasion, or example.

Do you influence your parents? Your brothers or sisters? Do you influence members of a team in your school? Do you influence others in your church? Scouts? JROTC? Sure you do! You lead others every day in so many ways. And most often it is NOT because you have the authority. You lead by your behavior and by setting the example for your brothers and sisters. You persuade your friends to do something they had not thought possible. You even lead yourself. In fact, that is where leadership begins — WITHIN YOU! More on leading from the inside out in Lesson 3.

Let's take a look at some case studies and pick out some of the behaviors that help influence others.

Case Studies

Which leader behaviors do you possess right now? Which behaviors do you need to improve upon to become a good leader? Think about these two questions as you read the following case studies. They will give you the opportunity to see how three very different people effectively used some leadership behaviors, failed to use others effectively, or did not apply some of them at all. Read each case study carefully.



Case #1

Jon is normally an average student. However, when he takes charge of a group to complete a project, his work and the finished effort of the group are always outstanding.

When asked about his group's results, his teammates proudly answered, "Jon makes it easy for us to complete our tasks. He helps us and makes suggestions when we need help, but he lets us do the work. If we have a problem, he always listens to our ideas on how to fix it.

"Because he is always excited about what he is doing, we get excited, too. He seems to know all he can about a task before we get started on it. While we are doing the task, he respects our views about how to complete it. He effectively uses the talents of everyone on

the team, and he makes smart decisions. He is always there for us if we need him and, somehow, he still finds the time to do his share of the project. Because of his effective work habits, he instills good work habits in us also.

"He accepts responsibility for the outcome of our tasks, whether good or bad. None of us wants a project to be done poorly, but he does not blame others for any mistakes that he or the team may have made. After finishing one task, we are always glad to begin the next project under his direction."

Would you like to be a member of Jon's team? What are his desirable characteristics? What are his undesirable characteristics?

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Case #2

Maria knows exactly what her position is all about. She gets excited whenever an instructor assigns her a project because she knows that she can get it done. Sometimes, she even suggests projects to her instructor. Based on her ideas, the instructor usually assigns them to her and her team.



Maria is highly motivated and has very structured work habits. She likes to map out a project in which everything is her decision. She then tells her team members how to do each step of their tasks according to her direction. She watches everything that her team members do, and if they appear to be

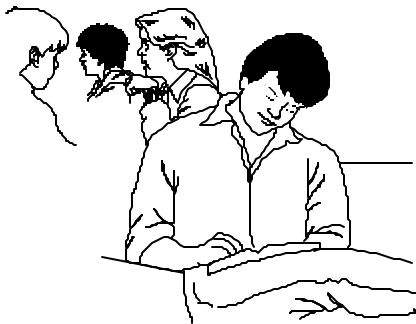
doing a task differently from her plan, she criticizes them.

Maria got upset once when a teammate was caught cheating. At first, she was afraid to talk to that person about the incident, and she did not know what to say to her peers who had also heard about it. Finally, after asking herself how she would like to be treated if she were the one involved, she called a team meeting.

At the meeting, Maria informed everyone that all team members make mistakes, not only as a team but also as individuals. She hoped that if they ever had any problems, they would turn to her and/or to another team member for help. They agreed.

Would you like to be a member of Maria's team? What are her desirable characteristics? What are her undesirable characteristics?

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Case #3

Brian is an easy-going person. He wants to complete projects with plenty of time left so that he and his friends on the team can relax. After he assigns tasks to each of his team members, he lets them figure out the best way to complete the tasks—without giving them any help, direction, or supervision. Plus, he rarely makes any decisions.

Then, when the time comes to complete the project, he still turns it in even though parts of it are not finished. When the final grade comes back, his group makes the lowest mark in the class, prompting an instructor to ask, “Why wasn’t your project done?”

Brian passes the blame on to his team members by saying, “They didn’t complete their parts like they should have. I don’t believe that I should have to be responsible for or to receive a bad grade because of their sloppy efforts.”

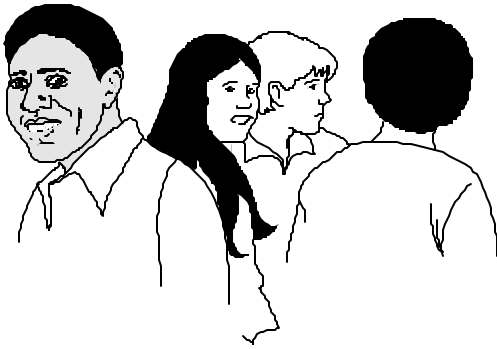
When the other team members find out their grades, they approach Brian, “Why didn’t you tell us everything that we were supposed to do? We could have worked harder and did it better if we had just known.”

Would you like to be a member of Brian's team? What are his desirable characteristics? What are his undesirable characteristics?

Reflection Questions:

These case studies illustrate the positive and negative application of leader behaviors. Do you possess any of them? What do you appreciate most about your leader behaviors? Can you identify which behaviors you need to work on to become an effective leader? Would you like to change or add any of them? Can you identify any positive behaviors in other people that you would like to adopt? In the next case study, see if you can pick up ways to add new leadership behaviors to your character.

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Case #4

Jason North had an opportunity one day to visit his father at work. He noticed that his dad's employees worked very hard for him. However, Peter, a mechanic who had worked on the assembly line for many years, seemed to resist all friendliness or help from the others. He also avoided speaking to Mr. North most of the time.

That afternoon, while the other employees and Jason were present, Mr. North approached Peter. He asked him, "What do you think of us purchasing the MXR-78 to help increase the production of the assembly line?"

Peter answered, "Why are you asking me? I really don't know much about it."

Mr. North responded, "You have a lot of experience here and I would like you to find out if the MXR-78 would make the line run more efficiently. So, will you do this for me?" With urging from the others, Peter accepted.

Later that evening, Jason asked his dad, "Why did you ask Peter to do that job?" Mr. North replied, "Peter is a reliable and experienced employee. He just needed some individual recognition. So, I gave him that assignment to make him feel more a part of this team."

NOTE: Although the previous story is just one example that pertains to only several leadership behaviors, Jason can definitely

learn from his father's approach in dealing with Peter. A positive role model like Mr. North can be a powerful influence in one's desire to adopt another person's positive leadership behaviors.

Making the Change:

Once you identify the behaviors that you wish to have, then what? Think of ways to fit the behavior into your personality and into the way you want to lead. Use that skill whenever it is appropriate — practice will make it a part of your style.

On the other hand, changing a negative behavior into a positive one is not easy. It may be like breaking an old habit. Use the following steps to change a negative behavior:

- Realize the need for change
- Have a positive attitude toward the change
- Follow through

Change is never easy, so keep trying. Just like other tasks, change requires dedication and perseverance. If you can perform a task a certain way and can see it through to completion, this positive behavior can become a lifetime habit.

Reflection Questions:

What did you learn about how you influence others? How effective do you think you are in influencing others? Are there some leadership characteristics you would like to adopt? Why?

CONCLUSION

Now is the time to begin identifying the leadership behaviors that you would like to possess. By adding new behaviors and/or changing negative ones, you can have a major influence on the development of your leadership potential.

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